

# REWRITE



# The Magazine of Effective Writing

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## CAN YOU DO MORE THAN WRITE?

Editorial relations and the way a writer, in his public relations, handles himself is a phase of writing that receives too little attention. In the long run mss. sell on the basis of the merit behind them. But "breaks" of timeliness and fortuitous opportunities, growing out of fortunate editorial contacts do have a lot to do with anyone's success. A writer to a large extent builds these happy turns and twists of destiny by the character he presents to the world in which he has his being and lives his professional work.

Let us look at some of these infrequently discussed, but very important, aspects of a working writer's job. The first thing to be observed is that a writer faces hundreds of small irritations, decisions, choices every day. But if he is smart or even thoughtful, these gradually build into an accumulation, a reservoir, so to speak, of experience. The sum of these helps him to sort out his continuing problems. Some of them become easy, automatically resolvable affairs. He knows from his experience immediately what is expected of him, and what his reaction should be. Others are not yet so clear, but nevertheless he has some background with which to face them. The demands of the job never lessen, but the routine can become less exacting.

Here is one editorial relationship that I saw in its round wholeness recently. I was going over some market tips. All at once, I noticed a frequently repeated phrase: "Send outline first." It came to me that the higher you go in the slick article field, the more an editor likes to have you submit the kernel of an idea first. You write him a memo, or submit through your agent. "Here's a good idea. Interested?" That in substance is what you say. Naturally, you try to deck the article of merchandise you seek to sell in as attractive a "dress" as you can. You arrange and organize the salient points as dramatically as you can. You give the editor nothing more than one page of material. Starting with the title and the stand-out points, you give him a form and enough substance so that he can "see" the idea, turn it over in his mind and think about its possible value to his magazine. If he likes it, he gives a blue pencil o. k., and maybe some tentative suggestions about emphasis and how-to-play-it. You go ahead and write it on speculation and then he gets down to business about accepting it.

Right there is where many a writer flubs a chance. He is impatient about waiting. A relationship in human relations develops. It is a two-way affair. The editor may reject, after giving you a come-on. He may be kindly and thoughtful, or thoughtless & selfish. And what about you? You may be hasty, eager and grasping for the check. Or you may have patience and keep your eye on the editorial job. A lot of your success in writing turns

on how you handle yourself at this point.

An old editor who is old enough to father me, and who, I have noticed in later life as I have gathered my own experience, hasn't always handled himself too well, gave me some good advice. He told me in my cub days never to use editors too hard, or let them use me to serve their own ends exclusively. It is not always easy in the heat of battle to make a good, sound decision in this respect. But it is an ideal to strive for.

I have seen a lot of writers fall into the pleasant, convenient rut that one magazine, or newspaper offers them. Writing to a certain extent consists of always reaching for the unobtainable, trying to hit the markets that are just beyond you. Another old newspaperman, one of my father's students, took me aside one day and said, "Bill, if you're interested in writing as against 'city room' reporting, don't stay here too long. If you do, you will never break free. The odd hours and the color, the excitement and anticipation of what tomorrow will bring, create an illusion that it will always be the same. You will never grow old. But you do." He was a fine newspaperman and a scholar. He never escaped before it was too late.

I have seen a lot more writers try to buy security by making the "right contacts". If "you know the right people", these writers, so pathetically, tell you, "it's just a matter of time before you click. So, instead of studying magazines and learning how to do a better piece than the next fellow, & filling themselves with something important to say, they go on sending out their misconceptions of what the editors want, and looking "wise" or snobbishly exultant when they get a personal letter from an editor. And they persist in seeking out editors and talking with the latter whenever these poor harried souls appear in public. "Apple polishing" and "back-patting" are two of the surest ways to make editors remember that you are a second rate hack.

As I see it after a quarter of a century, spent intensively in the field of writing & editing, a writer has three jobs that he has to learn to do well. He has first of all to learn to write well, as well as he is humanly able to do. When he is young this is all important. He's got to write better than the next chap or be brushed aside. But as youth leaves him, this ability is taken more & more for granted. It is still important, but the other two jobs assume ever greater place in the scale of values by which he is judged.

The first of these is to grow inside, the second to learn how to handle himself among people. Both of these are connected with what the world calls Character. As you stand for something good and fine, and as you are able to act "big" in your dealings with editors, you become a "property" or a "force" for good.

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MAKE      William E. Harris,      KEEP  
THE FREE    Elva Ray Harris,      AMERICA  
WORLD STRONG    Editors.      CLEAN

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS—we cannot be responsible for changes not received in this office ONE MONTH in advance of taking effect. Whenever possible, please give exact date of change. PROMPT RENEWALS save our time, permit us to publish a better magazine, and bring you an increased value for your money.

URGE YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE. As a matter of policy we accept no advertising. This allows us to report the entire field of writing and selling impartially for your best interests. Therefore, we need support from as many writers and friends as possible in order to give you a better, more dynamic magazine. REWRITE is your magazine. Use it.

WILL YOU BE ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS?

The Campaign is over. We, the American People, must close ranks, forget the divisions and the lost tempers, the hatreds stirred up and the indifference of large portions of the population. Now we have got a new team, and we must demand much of its members. All of us have a job to do, and we do it no good or ourselves either, if we don't take an interest in what's being done, and see to it that the job is done well. Part of our trouble today is that too many Americans, and others in other parts of the world, have taken no interest in elections, and management of their community affairs, until the final hoop-la, when it is too late. All of these public and private exhortations to get out the vote on election day have left us at REWRITE cold... The time to have thrown your weight was before the primaries—when the first eliminations were being dreamed up by the politicians. Then was the time for the people to demand and persuade good men all up and down the line to run for public office.

Were you satisfied with the Campaign as it was conducted this year? Did you think that it showed the best side of America to those from other countries, who observed from the sidelines? Did you like the smear tactics & the avoidance of real discussion of the issues? The generalized promises and the subservient attempts to woo the voters in place of two manly men discussing the problems of the day, and telling straightforwardly what they stood for? Was it a statesman-like campaign or two circus barkers trying to knock

each other out? A clean fight or a melee?

Did you like the explanation of the funds and the expenditure of millions to influence your vote? Did you sometimes wonder how all that money was raised in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of our corrupt practices laws? Did you occasionally ask yourself who was putting up all that 150 million dollars (generally supposed to have been spent on the overall election), and what they expected to get for their money? Did you wonder whether any of it came from gangsters & what promises they exacted from those politicians said to control large "machines"?

Did this first televised campaign make you aware for the first time that the machinery by which our democratic free elections operate, may just possibly creak? Did you begin to see that the electoral college system is potentially an unfair method of electing the most important representative of the people in the entire world? Did you see how minorities in a few key states, or in one voting district that has hundreds of thousands fewer voters than another, may exercise a power out of all proportion to its size?

Do you think that something ought certainly to be done about some or all of these ideas, to make our democracy a finer, surer, better tool in the hands of people intent on making our country a better place to live in and hence a stronger bastion for the "free" world struggling against slave dictatorship? Have you, hard pressed to pay your bills and carry your share of the load in your community, figured up what any part of that extraordinary sum spent on just one national election, would do towards producing a more abundant life for many perhaps now under-privileged in this country, or in some of the backward countries? Or to prevent disasters?

Do you realize that here in Massachusetts public moral indignation forced the Legislature to reconvene in special session & undo some of the wasteful, selfish legislation it passed? Do you realize that that moral indignation was entirely expressed through newspaper editorials and letters, postcards and word-of-mouth contact of individual citizens with their representatives? Did you know that Bishop Wright, Catholic bishop of Worcester diocese, has developed a very popular lecture proving that history, good and bad, is made century after century by the words men and children?

And are not words your tools, to use wisely or to waste in a stream empty of good ideas, or weak and ineffectually controlled? Not all of us can have the wisdom of Solomon. But everyone by his small contribution, can help to increase the storehouse of the human race. Some of us may be mistaken, but as we stimulate others to pursue truth and "nail" it down, we have laid our small blank in the endless road toward a better, stronger civilization. The future depends on you!

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### FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

#### "PURE POETRY"

In October, Bill and I went to see the New England Theater Conference Convention. Took a busman's holiday and had a wonderful time. I was impressed by what Sara Spenser, editor of the Children's Theater Press, Anchorage, Kentucky, said to me afterward, when I complimented her on a particular part of her speech about the children's theater. In beautiful phrases she had said that if you didn't have a model theater, adequate transportation and good props, there was something else far more important you could have. That was love.

She said if you had love for the children and love for the theater, the other necessary things would come. She said this to her audience in a very lovely way without a trace of sentiment. It was that part of her speech that I complimented her upon later during a social hour. She modestly smiled and said in an apologetic tone of voice, "Oh, that was—pure poetry."

This remark immediately left me with a let-down feeling. First, I was disappointed anyone should apologize for speaking a passage of pure poetry! And secondly, the apology indicated that she had been insincere in saying it. This I could not believe even though it came from one connected with the theater, who therefore, might be suspected of putting on a good act. So before she could disappear in the crowd I said fervently: "But you meant it, didn't you?" She seemed to sense how important it was for me to know for she dropped her modesty and admitted that she was sincere.

And that, it seems to me, is one of the basic qualifications of pure poetry. Absolute sincerity. If poetry is not sincere, it becomes mere play acting—and not too good play acting, either. For the portrayal is usually better if the actor can throw himself into his role heart and soul.

Sincerity phrased in beautiful, direct, & forceful language can never become sentimental whether it is written or spoken. Perhaps more care must be taken with the writing of it than the speaking, because one cannot rely on facial expression and tone of voice to diminish the overtones of a trite sentimental phrase. One must put his sincerity over with only the help of black letters & white spaces. We have probably all, at one time or another, had an opportunity to hear a speech which has moved us, and then to read a word by word transcription of it in the paper the next morning at breakfast. How flat it fell because speaking and writing are two different mediums. If the speaker were to have written what he had to say instead of speaking it, he would have to put across in words alone, all that he suggested on the stage with his

hands, his eyes, with movements of his head, his face, his feet, in fact his whole body, not to mention the inflections of his voice. We have all read plays in book form and know the difference between supplying in imagination all the gestures, intonations and movements that the living actors provide on the stage.

When we write pure poetry, we cannot gain the benefit of our own physical presence, or any props to aid us in transmitting our sincerity. Therefore, we must make words do the utmost for us. We must remember that words, the same ones we use, have been used also by other people before us in other situations. And that we cannot divorce them from any or all of these people and situations. Nor can we expect words to act exclusively for us in accordance with our wishes in a particular, special instance. We must consider the backgrounds and travels of words, and the inescapable fact that their reputations & overtones have been made by the company they've kept. And that, incidentally, is the secret of overtones, which we are constantly bringing up in the Poet's Workshop. We must try to make words bring us the best of their past, and never allow anything "shady" to creepin to adulterate our own pure poetry.

Just the other day we watched a good example of the power of reputation. This time it was not the reputation of words, but rather of music. We drove to Boston to see an English company do Gilbert & Sullivan ("The Pirates of Penzance"). At one point toward the end of the first act the whole mood of this play changes. The stage is filled with beautiful girls in frivolous costumes, & pirates wearing gaudy outfits. The major general is decked out brightly in his scarlet uniform. Suddenly everyone drops to his knees. Even the major general flips out his handkerchief and places it carefully on the ground so as to keep from soiling his spotless trousers. Then they raise their hands in a reverential gesture. The music changes from the gay, light type of score for which Gilbert & Sullivan are so famous, to a slow, measured chorus. Immediately the audience is aware only of the religious overtones that the familiar music brings with it. The incongruous costumes appear to fade back into the set. It was the music alone that brought about this change of mood, and the music could not have done it, if it had not been trading on a remembered, echoing reputation. We have heard that sort of music so often in church that we were at once transported into a mood of reverence in the midst of frivolity.

I was interested to hear more than one person at the N. E. Theater Conference session say that you could not put on a good show unless you had a good play to start with. If the play had nothing to say, you should not waste time and money gathering properties & rehearsing lines.

And that is the case with pure poetry. If

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you have nothing to say, it is senseless to struggle with the expression of it. There is plenty to be said these days—about many of the eternal verities. It may all have in past generations been said before. However, it bears repeating. Every time anyone finds for himself or rediscovers an old truth, that is an occasion for writing a poem, for capturing and pinning down in appropriate words and images, which vary with the individual, the thoughts and feelings that occur again & again to people down through the ages. Ideas and emotions that people enjoy reading about frequently. They have a need to be reassured that these things are so.

Have something worthwhile to say—not necessarily something new, but something true. Say it sincerely and say it well. I guarantee that you will find you have been writing pure poetry!

Remember! In December we discuss "Courage" by Josephine Murray Emms. Deadline: Nov. 10th. But send a comment anyway. They will be sent to the author and will help her. (We pay \$1 for each poem used in the Poet's Workshop. A constructive comment of someone else's poem must accompany every ms. submitted. Even if you are not writing, help the other writers with your comments. You can learn and appreciate poetry better by analyzing the material you read. For "Courage" see: Oct. issue.)

#### SOME POETRY NOTES

The October issue of POETRY, Karl Shapiro, 232 East Erie St., Chicago II, Ill., was the 40th Anniversary issue. It contained only a selection of solicited poems by outstanding poets of all types. It was a large issue.

In the same issue there was an announcement regarding PERSPECTIVES USA, Intercultural Publications, 655 Madison Ave., NYC 21, the new magazine primarily for distribution abroad, but available here on subscription from the Paragon Mailing Service, 347 Adams St. Brooklyn I, N. Y. Mostly Reprint, but "a part is to be new writing." It is backed by the Ford Foundation.

Bill Comments. As a prosaic editor charged with covering white paper with little ink spots, Bill rises to call attention to some obvious problems raised by the poem printed in the next column. The use of long lines is a rejection factor that makes it impossible for some editors to publish poems of considerable merit they would otherwise accept. A column 43 characters wide just simply won't hold a poem the lines of which average more than 50 characters long. Rather than double up lines, as we have done, many editors decide to send the ms. back.

Duplicate Subscriptions. A number of subscribers have taken advantage of our method of enabling them to cut and file REWRITE. To have an extra copy sent to the same address each month, just ~~send~~ <sup>mail</sup> an additional. It is a great convenience to you, and to us.

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#### SOME THOUGHTS ON PLAYWRITING

There was much said about the need for an improved level in playwriting at the panels and general discussions of the N. E. Theater Conference Convention. Robert E. Sherwood in his luncheon speech referred to it. In the summary of the Secondary School Theater, it was suggested that if "we don't produce the inferior plays, there will be more interest in the good ones, and these will become more plentiful." And in the Community and College Theater groups it was argued that there can well be more emphasis on good plays and less dependence on Broadway hits, or the experimental type of thing that is often over the average audience's head.

For playwrights there is of course the two extremes: either they must write for Broadway or the non-professional theater. There is much work to be done yet to make the latter profitable for a writer. But the market is growing. If a writer can work through an interested and sympathetic group, there can be hope of a production. And if a play gets tested, one or another publisher will often take a chance on promoting it.

Sometimes the short one act play provides an opportunity to get an entering wedge, although one act plays are not produced as often as they used to be. Most audiences prefer a sustained evening's entertainment. And the ability to sell tickets is a overwhelming factor for most non-commercial groups. A play that will provide an adequate number of parts and good entertainment, thus pleasing both the company and the audience in a high school theater, is by all odds the best bet for a starting playwright in this field.

February Poet's Workshop Poem. Here is the poem to be discussed in the February issue. Send in your comment any time.

#### WATERLILY

By M. Lovina Cooper

Medallion like, on pad of jade-green,  
water-glossed,  
You float serene, in frame of beauty  
unembossed,  
On pool of malachite shot through with  
rippled gold.  
Around your pointed petals insects hum  
and bold  
Slim dragonflies dart sportively in flight,  
each one  
Irradiant-winged, and droning in the  
shimmering sun  
In ceaseless monotone. Prim pad and  
petals lie  
Upon reflected white and blue of cloud  
and sky.  
as censer to some Pagan god you raise your rap  
From whose gold throat its fragrant scents  
drift slowly up  
To float unseen, perchance to dim and  
distant goals  
Where live undying, fadeless waterlily souls.

## VISUALIZE AND REACH FOR "COLOR"

Always be specific. Give the visual image that suggests an individual picture instead of the plain drab phrasing that has no overtones. Say, Mary hurried toward the barn door than the door. Get the other senses into it also. Make us feel the warm, weather-beaten and rough, splintery clapboards of the barn And the tantalizing hiss and savory odor of breakfast bacon; the pinging zing of a shower and the accumulated smells of sweat, liniment and dirty uniforms in the lockerroom. Or what it feels like to tramp through deep snow, or fight a raging forest fire.

When you can make us see and feel the terror of wild animals maddened by heat, and the sight of billowing sheets of flame leaping, gyrating from the tops of sizzling, electric pine trees, you are beginning to learn your job as a writer and story-teller. (The two are not necessarily mutually inclusive.) I am not one of those who believes that you have to experience everything before you can adequately describe it.

It helps to have put out small fires with nothing but your bare hands. And to observe giant conflagrations in the teasers used to lure people into movie theaters for a spectacular, colossal, stupendous bunch of melodrama next week. But the real answer to the problem is to learn to harness your eyes and heart, so they can be automatically stirred by the sights and sounds and tell-tale signs that destiny drops across your path or that your sub-conscious pricks you into thinking about.

## REWRITE COVERS ANOTHER CONFERENCE

On a gorgeous Saturday morning in October Elva and I drove through the lovely autumnal coloring of our countryside to attend in Boston the first annual convention of the "New England Theater Conference". Professionals, non-commercial and amateur theater groups at every level were represented. Lawrence Langner of the Theater Guild spoke at one of the five panel discussions (Children's theater, Secondary schools, College theater, Community and Professional theaters). Robert E. Sherwood, noted Pulitzer prize playwright & Founder of the Council for the Living Theater, flew up from New York to address delegates who crowded the huge Georgian Room in the Statler and remained until 6 PM for afternoon summaries and plans for the future. The theater is not dead when it can hold so many people through a 9½ hour continuous talk fest!

We each attended different groups and got detailed notes on the afternoon sessions. It was a stimulating day, and, we believe, successful in launching officially a new cooperative venture to breathe life into theatrical activities in New England. We hope to report on it in REWRITE for several months. The new ideas will last even longer.

## NEWS AND COMMENT ALONG THE WAY

The American Poetry League has awarded two free subscriptions to REWRITE, given by Bill and Elva for several years, to Rabbi Alexander Steinbach of Brooklyn, N. Y., and Miss Eloise Wade Hackett, St. Paul, Minn. It is an amusing coincidence that Miss Hackett was herself among the prize donors, several of whom are members of the WCS Family.

The APL conducts an annual poetry award in June. It is an organization that includes a large and representative membership of well known poets and less experienced versifiers. Also a few editors, like Bill, who couldn't write a poem if the court sentence was to be shot at dawn after standing all night on ice barefoot. (Bill and Elva are honorary members.) Membership is by invitation in January and July; dues very nominal. We are always glad to nominate new members. Write in during the next month or two, if you'd like to join. We'll forward your name to the APL officers.

The CHRISTOPHERS, 18 East 48th St., NYC 17, cancelled their News Notes (free, with circulation around 700,000) in mid-summer, and devoted the money thus saved to TV productions, which are distributed to the stations free. The October issue, avoiding an appeal for money, gave the organization's "once-a-year" report on its projects and how they're paid for.

This organization, although Catholic in its background, attracts many non-Catholics and stresses its two-fold ambition: (1) "to spread far and wide the love and truth of Christ; & (2) to show by practical examples the great good that can be accomplished by one person working in his own way and environment, for the common good of all."

The work of this organization approaches, indeed, the vision that Christianity at its best holds of a potential kingdom of Heaven on earth shared by all men. We wish sincerely that all Christians, Catholics included, would settle their little corporate and ritualistic differences, and really practice the practical Christianity they each and severally profess. It would be the greatest, most direct single step toward peace the world has ever seen. Only when men cease to praise and worship temporal power in the family, in the business or industrial organization, in the labor union, in government and in the church will there be real "peace on earth and good will among men". Only when men stop saying, "You must, or else"—, and substitute, "Let's do this good job together."

In line with this thought, which certainly is a prayer on the lips and in the hearts of millions, the Macmillan Co. is publishing "The Taming of the Nations" by Prof. F. S. C. Northrop, Sterling Professor of Law at Yale University, who declares America should base its "entire foreign policy on an ideological

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principle--namely, that one world has space for many cultures."

### AN EDITOR SAYS HIS SAY ABOUT WRITERS

Here is a comment we received not long ago from an editor, who used to be on the other side of the fence. Writers can learn from a careful meditation on how they appear in an editor's eyes. They can also increase their sales by improving their selling techniques as a result of this meditation.

"It seems to me," writes our correspondent bitterly, "that writers can be about as tactless as any group you can think of, if you can characterize groups. Before I became an editor I used to do quite bit of writing, & I got my pack of rejection slips. But I never sent off letters to harass editors. Some of the writers that have been submitting to us go so far, in fact, as to give us actual 'lectures'.

"A good writer doesn't try to talk down to the reader. I wonder why some of them try it on the editors. After all, the latter can be best described as 'first readers'. If these writers really saw the editor as such, they would undoubtedly submit their mss. cold, & come off a lot better."

That's very true. In any large office the mss. are opened by a mailing secretary, and then given to the first reader. In big magazine offices, there is one of these initial readers for the general mail; and another for the special stuff that comes in from agents, or well known professionals, and an assortment--of specials, who come recommended from critics, teachers, WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE, or friends and previous contributors. In other words, persons whose recommendations can usually be depended upon. In a few rare instances, mss. that would ordinarily be assigned to this pile go, for personal reasons, direct to the fiction editor or his first assistant. But in nine cases out of ten these mss. from the "rush" pile go back and get in line for final consideration.

What the great majority of writers do not recognize is that every ms. gets a reading, and then an o.k. on the decision. Generally, the few that survive reading on the "unrush" pile, are sent to the second reader who has charge of the special pile. If she likes them they follow along with the rush stuff she's already forwarded. All of these go to the fiction editor, his assistant and perhaps that invaluable secretary, who watches this day-by-day flow, and who often serves as liaison officer between all of the readers. Depending upon how pressed the reading force is, a regular traffic flow of this kind is always maintained. When the supply gets too heavy, other reserves are rushed in. These may be, for example, other departmental editors.

Again, few writers appreciate the fact of how carefully the finally accepted mss. are

### "YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN CONDITIONS"

Orville E. Reed, a member of the WCS Family, enunciates a sound philosophy in "TIME" that whimsical little postcard magazine he terms the "world's smallest house organ". He uses it to plug his direct mail advertising business in Howell, Michigan. (Adv!)

"The successful sales managers," he says, "are the ones who pay little attention to 'conditions', but go ahead with aggressive, positive advertising and promotion plans 12 months in the year. They create their own conditions--conditions of continuous sales, and profits."

Substitute "writers" for "sales managers" and ponder twice the identical excuses that both professionals make for not trying to do their work now: summer slump, election, and Christmas, first of the year, income taxes, etc., etc., and I think most impartial readers of REWRITE would go along with him.

read. The fiction editor having tentatively decided that he wants a story, "proves" his correctness of judgment by trying the story on several of these other departmental editors, perhaps even on the publisher. This is regular technique if the story is at all controversial or questionable in taste or other important factors. Very often the editor in discussing a story with his colleagues discovers that a particular story might fit well with some special project of one of the non-fiction editors. Or it might jibe, like one of those modern gas-pipe chairs in a colonial, New England interior. Conditions of appropriateness such as these often dictate the delayed publication or regretful refusal of a story that almost made the grade.

These are factors that the experienced or professional writer does not always take into consideration, but he has learned they're not to be argued with. But the less experienced writer does not think about them. He merely jumps to the conclusion that a story is gathering dust, or has been lost or isn't even read. And really, when you come to the basic matter of it, an editor hasn't a ghost of a chance. If he slaps it back right off, he hasn't read the story. And if he holds it for thorough reading, or, as I have unfolded the routine, for office discussion, he is giving some other writer on the inside an opportunity to steal the immortal idea.

Perhaps, however, this explanation of the workings of a big slick office, will assist writers to gain some patience in waiting for a decision, and in perceiving the rightness of sending in a ms. cold. After all, smaller offices follow more or less the same general routine. It varies only in details. An editor does the best he can, and he is primarily an executive officer, an administrator, who is briefed by his reading staff and then makes the best decision he can. He is constantly searching for good stories which will fit the pattern & theme of his book.

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### TO WRITE OR NOT TO WRITE A LETTER?

The question of whether to write a letter to accompany a ms. submitted to an editor is a recurring one. Many writers and editors I have talked with, say: "Send it cold!" That is probably good sense. It is obvious a ms. is being offered for sale. You don't need to tell the editor that. What else is there to say?

Well, I have always felt that an editor's curiosity is always aroused when he picks up a ms. Why was this sent to us? Who wrote it and does he know what he is talking about? I recognize fully that the ms. itself can answer best for itself. However, I don't have any doubt in the world that even the crustiest editor in the business likes to have a brief background fill-in on the overtones of the author's general fitness to write a ms. and his reasons for doing so. A good editor seldom reads this kind of material before he reads the ms. But afterwards, while he prepares to make up his mind, especially if he is favorably disposed, he likes to look over the general situation. It has been known that a writer tries to sell a story he cannot write, when all the time he has a better story up his sleeve, or in his own life.

I know that big business likes to be business-like, crisp and impersonal. But it is when the little human touches are exposed & people see the human side of the person they are dealing with, that the magic of nature's unexpected quirks most often develop. Sometimes it is the small, seemingly unimportant fact that you hold back, which is the key to a story, or the spark that strikes fire and lights up the imagination of another person. For that reason I try never to leave it all to chance. I try never to take up an editor's time unnecessarily, but I also try as best I can to tell him anything I think he ought to know about the story or my serious attempt to do a good job. Sometimes this is a waste of time, the editor will have none of it. But I believe that breaks and luck are to a considerable extent "made". Destiny is much more likely to introduce the unexpected, if you, the party of the first part, give it a little something to feed upon.

Of course a garrulous, vain, conceited or thoughtless person can overdo the simple idea of saying to an editor, "I am sending a story (article, or poem) to you because"—. A young editor recently put his finger on a hazard in this business in a letter to us:

"Doesn't it irk an editor to get covering letters that go into detail about the past & various successes of the submitter? Fact is, I read with a sharper eye the ms. that comes in with a letter telling how the writer has had 600 so-and-so mss. published, and is an active member of skatay-eight organizations, etc. What counts is the ms. in hand, and no amount of past success will make a poor ms. acceptable to a discerning editor--unless he

believes he has something special to gain by such an acceptance."

This editor ends by expressing the thought that a "Hemingway or a Steinbeck doesn't have to put any more than his name and address on his ms., while a Jones or Smith will do just as well if he reaches a good editor with the best ms. he is capable of writing." There I am inclined to disagree with my friend. Not of course as to the idea that the inexperienced writer needs to writer as, if not better than his big name competitor. For that's the surest way to come in first.

No, I think the big name writer faces peculiar professional hazards that the lesser writers will find distasteful when it comes their turn to share them. A big name author is always expected to be good with a capital & bold face "G". If he writes an occasional—shall we call it by its real name?—stinker, the whole world knows immediately via a grapevine, that he is slipping. If he tries to resist the pressure from editors to multiply his production, editors consider him a "queer". The small markets are largely closed to him, because it is supposed to demean him to write for less than 4-figure checks.

And always editors are embarrassed when a ms. is received from him. If the market is a regular with him, the editor is expected to buy it no matter whether it fits his inventory or a momentarily tight budget, or not. If the market is a new one, the editor cannot help wondering why the big name is suddenly available to him (has Mr. B. N. had a falling out with his last editor?) Or is an agent trying to establish a cross ruff so he can play two editors against each other and parlay Mr. B. N.'s. earnings into the higher brackets?

Most embarrassing of all is that time the editor has to tell the big name or his agent that the piece smells and should be pinched gingerly between the fingers and given to a garbage collector. You just don't give "go-to-hell" slips signed, "the editors", to an author who has hit the big slicks. Writers who have reached the top certainly work in a glass house, and have to explain their movements, their reasons for writing and general philosophy much more carefully than less experienced or successful writers.

It all adds up to the fact that you've got to achieve an appropriateness and felicity, and be able to keep these on tap in both the mss. you write and the technique you use in approaching editors. I have found that naturalness is one of the best methods on both levels. It is true there are stuffed shirts among editors just as there are among writers. With these you are not likely to reach first base by being natural. But in general you average out pretty well, if you communicate briefly and matter of factly to editors your reasons for writing, for submitting a ms. to them, and your qualifications, if any.

## REWRITE

### THIS MONTH'S NEW BOOKS

**BEST ADVICE ON HOW TO WRITE.** Gorham Munson. Hermitage House. \$6.50. The idea behind the book Mr. Munson has put together is good. I find this anthology very exasperating, however, because you find yourself reading the snippets and teasers the editor has clipped and edited to suit his purpose. These are a widely ranging selection from other books about writing. It is good to have them gathered in one place, but annoying to the serious writer already in possession of an average library of the better books.

**WRITING FOR TELEVISION.** Gilbert Seldes. Doubleday & Co. \$3.00. Mr. Seldes is best known as a critic and commentator, but he has had 8 years as head of CBS' TV Program Dep't. & has done his share in writing, directing, & adapting, as well as producing 1,500 hours' worth of every type show. The book is well organized, and while Mr. Seldes generalizes a good deal, there is plenty of specific do this or that. His critical, yet creative, analysis of Maugham's "Of Human Bondage", in terms that a serious fictional craftsman in any medium can understand, is stimulating & masterful. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

**WALT WHITMAN: Thinker & Artist.** Arthur E. Briggs. Philosophical Library. \$4.75. This is a 500-page study of the man and his work. It is the thoughtful reaction of an author, who is the leader of the Los Angeles Ethical Culture Society, who has filled his thought upon the subject with many quotations & comparisons with other poets of the past & the present. Therefore, a stimulating project.

**LIBERAL ARTS DICTIONARY.** Ed. Mario Pei and Frank Gaynor. Philosophical Library. \$6.00. A valuable tool for writers in the "liberal arts" field. Common words have been standardized so meanings & overtones will be similar in English, French, German and Spanish. An attempt to find areas of agreement.

**A DAY ON THE COPY DESK.** Emil L. Telfel & C. G. Pearson. Univ. Kansas School of Journalism & Rinehart & Co. \$4.00. This is a manual of copyreading exercises showing how the copy should be prepared for newspapers, big and little. It is primarily of interest for editors. But it would help writers immensely to understand thoroughly some of the mysteries of getting copy into usable compositional style for actual printing. They would benefit especially from the exercises, even though more explanatory comment would help.

**CITIZENS OF THE WORLD.** Stringfellow Barr... Preface by Justice William C. Douglas. Doubleday & Co. \$4.00. It is the thesis of men of the character of Barr and Douglas that Communism thrives on the hunger and disease afflicting 2 billion people in the world. That America cannot possibly win the war that is inevitable, by arms and propaganda and food alone. Mr. Barr offers a plan for world reconstruction to gain economic and political

### THE NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

Riding on the tail of a small but virulent New England hurricane, Bill drove down to a session of Doris Marston's group, the Piscataqua Pens, in Portsmouth, N. H., on the 3rd Friday in September. In spite of sensational heads in the evening paper about damages by wind and rain, practically all the group and a few new members were present. We discussed 3 mss. Bill had read in advance, and Bill answered questions, teamed with Doris, to talk over special individual problems, & exhibited the Central Ms. Markets File, and a selection of books got together by WRITERS BOOK CLUB. Good talk till a late hour.

After a visit with Doris & Phil and their 4 nice kids, and a golden Indian summer morning's ramble along the York beaches, luncheon with Carroll Towle in Durham, Bill hurried back to a busy desk at WCS House. Lots of mss. (long ones) and several conferences with visitors from out of town.

It's been a golden Indian summer, and our maple studded roads here have been spectacular. Bill's evening walk to the Postoffice has been a revelation of beautiful reds and gold over head and under foot. Warm days have prolonged activities in the garden....Bill's acting as Grange captain in hospital drive. EQUALITY AMONG THE NATIONS, thus knocking the props out from under the Soviet exploitation of the underdeveloped countries. As Justice Douglas remarks with gentle irony, this "is what the Great Debate of 1952 should have been about". If you wish our civilization to continue, you had better read and reread several times this book. Disagree with it if you wish to, but don't ignore it.

**JUST FOR TODAY.** Fr. James Keller. Doubleday & Co. \$2.00. The latest Christopher book by the Catholic priest who has won the affection of admirers of true Christianity from all races and creeds. A book of one-minute daily devotions and meditation.

**FELICITY FINDS A WAY.** Eleanor M. Jewell... Viking Press. \$2.75. This book by a loyal & longtime member of the WCS Family, is a living proof that a good junior novel can be an exciting adventure in reading for mature adult readers. It's the story of a little American girl patriot transplanted just after the Revolution to the Bahamas by her loyalist grandparents. If you want to study good characterization, read it.

**NOTE:** this is not all the books we've received for review this month. It shows publishers consider REWRITE an important medium. Buy your books through The WRITERS BOOK CLUB, or borrow them through the WCS CIRCULATING LIBRARY. You will save money.

Florence M. Davis, Gray, Me., had a practical note about "Round Robin" in the fall issue of LEAGUE LINES, the leaflet published by League of Vt. Writers. Good "how to do"

## REWRITE

### A GREAT DRAMATIST THINKS OUT LOUD

Robert E. Sherwood, speaking at the luncheon of the N. E. Theater Conference convention, gave a stimulating and thought-provoking talk. The audience sprang to its feet to welcome the Pulitzer Prize dramatist and active member of the Playwrights' Theater, who helped write many of FDR's wartime speeches and confessed that he has right now recently been working at the same trade during the pre-election campaign.

Pointing to the fact that he himself hasn't had a successful play for 13 years, he confirmed the thought expressed everywhere during the Convention, that the professional theater is in a period where anyone can "lose a lot of money on a big success." He illustrated this with "Street Scene" and "Lost In the Stars", the first of which lost \$60,000 on a short road tour and the latter closed after a shorter search for audiences on the road.

That seemed to be the theme-song of the N. E. Theater Conference convention: that everywhere there is an audience eagerly awaiting a continuous flow of good theater at prices below what the professional theater can apparently manage. Not enough productions and inflated prices are the problems. Why, with a glorious past, is the Theater impotent.

Mr. Sherwood answered his own question by saying he does not believe playwrights have been able to keep up with their own times. A world in flux, yet they have not found ways to comment or interpret the drama lying all around them. Eugene O'Neill and the others, of that period, proved a false dawn. As for himself and the rest of that generation, he wondered if "age, skepticism and exhaustion might not be the secret." Sherwood thinks of the Theater as a "temple of faith, an opportunity for youth. We have successful younger artists today in every phase of the theater but writing."

He described the work of the New Dramatists (we will give you the figures he used, elsewhere. Ed.) and also of the 47 Workshop, at Harvard in the Twenties, as being projects, which have provided "opportunities for dramatists to find themselves." Vehemently, and immediately at this point, he interjected a thought that dramatists cannot be "made" by teaching, however good. The core of a writer with something to say, and a "passionate belief in the theater as his medium must be there."

Mr. Sherwood looked with scorn upon writers in this day and age who can find nothing to write about. "Anything and everything" he cried, so long as a writer believes in something and has a point of view, a perspective with which to sharpen his particular contribution. He reminded his listeners of a previous phrase he had offered. "Temple of faith" He called for a passionate belief in what he termed the "deathless dignity of man". He quoted Sophocles and Shakespeare. "What wonder

is a man!" Man who is mortal, yet capable of reaching into heaven; of making credible the incredible. He recalled the old Athenian idea of "God in man".

He closed this portion of his talk saying a great play has always been a great inspiration and that great dramatists have always basically stood for human rights. The theater, he stated, is a hard and bitter highway to the stars. But plainly he believes it is worth all the agony and pain. The movies and TV, he said, can give a man security, & they are interesting media. But they do not give a writer the same "essential air of freedom" that the theater with all its difficulties offers him to say what is in him to say. "In the theater a man may write untrammeled by fear and hucksters," he asserted. He believes that the real theater with its living actors and its blend of light and color, intellect and emotion, is the greatest of all media. "It is the greatest artistic forum."

Those who love the theater, Mr. Sherwood, in his closing word of advice to the gathering, advised, should cultivate an interested audience for the theater. He told of recently giving a talk before a writer's club in Los Angeles. Of the 125 writers there only 4 were potential playwrights. Although a jam-packed program had put the Convention a half-hour behind running time and Mr. Sherwood was under pressure of passing time, he cut only 3 pages from his typed ms., and he extemporized at both ends of it. Directed mainly at actual workers in the theater, Mr. Sherwood's words carried a deep thought for all writers. REWRITE believes strongly that to the degree that writers in every field of writing, however lightly and humorously they treat their subjects, pack realistic meaning and moral faith into their ms. they'll win material and spiritual success. Most of all, they will find it easier to live with themselves.

### AN AUTHOR RATES SOME EDITORS' PAY

Here is an interesting and, I think, very accurate, analysis of one corner of the juvenile religious market. For obvious reasons, I am keeping this comment anonymous. But I can assure you, the author has sold stories and articles to both the better paying & the lower pay magazines. She writes:

"I've got an acceptance from UPWARD, Southern Baptist paper, for a story. They pay much better than most of the church papers. I was satisfied and I am putting them at the top of my list, under the Methodists. (The Methodists pay best of all and conduct the juvenile syndicate, which resells some of their pieces to the editors of other Sunday School papers. This results in a small further payment to the authors. Ed.)

The Northern Baptists are on a sliding scale, giving you a little more for each additional sale. But even after 3 acceptances, they pay me less than the Southern Baptists."

REWRITE

SOME FILLER MARKETS AND NEWS

"How Did You Handle It?" FAMILY CIRCLE, 25 West 45th St., NYC 36, pays \$5 for letters, that tell "how you handled a child-rearing, bringing up children from baby to teen-age, situation—the method or device you used or the attitude you found most helpful." An extra \$5 is paid for the ms. chosen for illustration with drawings.

PATHFINDER, Dept. T, Washington 5, D. C., (Sept. Issue) stated that it "will pay \$10, for unusual ideas which service clubs, merchants and community developers can use"... Under the head: "Along Main Street" 5 brief ideas that had been actually used, were outlined. Name of the town, state and population were given.

We thank Ida Hurwitz & Helen Langworthy—for commemorative stamps (used), the sale of which will help the WCS Fund for handicapped writers.

Every so often there appear new additions to the market lists for writers. Some of the newer ones try to offer special weekly service at a high cost. Others claim specialized or individualized service at less exorbitant fees. The tip-off on most of them is that they obviously do not maintain a large staff to keep them timely & are not edited in areas where most of the magazines appear. I have found the lists of The WRITER, Boston St., Boston 16, Mass., and PEN MONEY, A. D. Freese & Co., Upland, Indiana, the least expensive and generally most satisfactory in keeping up to date. Just buy the magazines.

The Federal Trade Commission has ordered, that The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. plainly edit its Signet & Mentor pocket books to indicate abridging & new titles

Federal Trade Commission has ordered that International Publishers Service, 707 Broadway, Los Angeles, Cal., stop "certain practices in connection with the solicitation of magazine subscriptions". The long list consented to by the company includes failure to obtain delivery, substitution of unrequested magazines, and over-charging above regular subscription rates.

Brother George Wargo, Streator, Ill., has suggested that writers can save money putting 6 drops of any good gum, or machine oil, on the dried out typewriter ribbons they've got. "Do not put over 6 drops, as it smudges when you type."

We believe that some cash outlay can thus be saved. Persons who sell ribbon renewers, advise us that the most successful way is to alternate ribbons and, if possible, to hang a ribbon up to "dry", so that the fluid can penetrate evenly. Whether the time thus invested is well used or not, is for each person to decide for himself. Certainly typewriter ribbons have increased in cost & decreased noticeably in wearing quality.

DON'T FIRE AT EDITORS "BLIND"!

One reason why no serious writer can possibly afford not to read a lot of magazines, and that merely means looking at their format, is that in the filler field the market is constantly changing. Probably, if anyone checked back for 20 years, he would discover that COLLIER'S short short story was the only continuously maintained feature.

This does not mean that the interests and reading habits of readers have changed very much. We now read anecdotes and humor where ten years ago we were still reading a short short story in the brief white spaces which required filler material. But in the prose, or non-fiction, departmentalized areas, the women still read new recipes, child-rearing problems, problems of better management and more gracious living in the home, etc., etc.

The trick is that editors know that fresh window-dressing is required to keep readers reading. So they change the names of a column, place it in a different position, give it a fresh slant. One department will disappear for a little while and then reappear in a new dress. Readers are interested by such changes, intrigued to watch and buy. Writers are expected to be familiar with what's happening.

Nothing offends an editor so much as when a writer sends in a contribution for a feature that was discontinued ten years ago. A writer who has not discovered the sensational changes that have taken place in COSMO—both in format and general appeal—does not, of course, have a Chinaman's chance when he simply sends in blind a ms. that has been around the slick circuit.

The point is that the serious writer also is a serious salesman. He knows enough not to try to sell bricks to a plumber. When he is ringing an editor's doorbell, if he is anything of a salesman, he knows the "breaks", those intangible runs of luck and quirks of destiny, may be temporarily against him. But if this editor is buying at all, he has the kind of material that ought to interest him a great deal. In a word, he has cased every prospect; he knows what kind of material he uses, when he is likely to use certain specialized types, and where in the magazine. He has eliminated all the foreseeable "breaks" and has the confident knowledge that he may get a gentle assist instead of a shove from fate. He is ready to take advantage of that "break" if it comes.

That is why just making a list of periodicals when you have a ms. ready, and irrevocably shooting it down the line, is like a mail-order salesmen's impersonal, but snappy, folder going out to 100,000 people, all addressed as: "Householder, Rural Route", & machine stamped to individual towns. Naturally, some suckers will bite, but can you afford such a mailing? the chance in 10,000? Knowing your market is your best bet. Do it!

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Acceptances reported to us this month:

Kathryn Wilson  
Article: YOUR GUIDE.

Katherine Dudley  
Essay: C. S. MONITOR.

Winona Nichols  
Short Story: UPWARD.

Bess H. Tofft  
Poem: IMPROVEMENT ERA.

Kleanore M. Jewett  
Juvenile book: VIKING PRESS. (Just out.)

Ridgely Cummings  
Short Story: COUNTERPOINT.  
Essay: TRACE (England).  
Book Review: ANTIOCH REVIEW.

Elvin McDonald  
Articles: ORGANIC GARDENING, AM. HOME.  
FARM JOURNAL, Weekly Star FARMER HORTICULTURE. The HOME GARDEN. HOLLANDS.

Note: Elvin is a high school sophomore  
and editor of The GLOXINIAN. He's 15½.

Peggie Schulz  
Article: PROFITABLE HOBBIES.

Note: she is co-editor of The GLOXINIAN, and was consultant to HOUSEHOLD,  
regarding an article published in it.

Send in your notes. They are a very valuable tip to what editors are buying.

PENN. POETRY SOCIETY, Box 232, State Museum, Harrisburg, Pa., (open to members out of the state), offers \$5, \$3, \$2 for lyrics not over 32 lines (all members). Also: \$3, \$2 & a book prize for rondeaus (limited to those members who have not had a book published). Col. Henry W. Shoemaker, 1st. v.p., offers: \$5 and a book prize for a folklore legend.

Samuel French, William Talbot, ed., 25 W. 45th St., NYC, is one of the leading drama publishers and play brokers. A small reading fee has been charged.

Baker's Plays, 569 Boylston St., Boston 16, Mass. (new address) is one of the older publishers in this field. The firm is now owned by Samuel French, and in turn controls a list or two of other publishers, it is understood.

Plays. A. S. Barnes, 8 Arlington St., Boston 16, Mass., is a magazine publishing non-royalty plays for young people of different age-groups. The same editor also edits: The WRITER, which also publishes a line of books for writers.

Please RENEW your subscriptions Promptly.

Memo on a Prize Award.

Charles Austin Beard Memorial Prize, Alfred A. Knopf, 501 Madison Ave., NYC 22, was not awarded this year. \$500 in cash, a contract for publication is offered, even years for works in Political Science, & odd years for works in American History. Next Closes: July 31, 1953. But write in soon for information and blank.

PENN. POETRY SOCIETY (More). Contests are open until March 15, 1953. Send entries to: Mrs. Blanche Keysner, 213 So. 20th St., Harrisburg, Pa. Membership applications to the address given in the previous column.

REPORT ON THE PROSE WORKSHOPS

There were so few "flashbacks" submitted, for Fiction Workshop No. 12, that we are regretfully rescheduling that for Feb. 10th & I will try to discuss that problem next issue. Send in a ms. before Feb. 10th.

The mss. submitted in Workshop No. 12, in September, which got crowded out of the October issue, were also so few that discussion is not practical. The one ms. we would like to have printed is, on close examination, very confused. Reluctantly, therefore, I'm forced to reschedule this workshop also. Send in a dramatic Scenario before April 10th. I'll build a discussion of this problem also before the workshop closes.

The great problem in these workshops seems to be an ignorance on the part of those entering, as to what is expected. Over a year or more these workshops have revealed to me a startling inability among average fiction writers to handle at all professionally the simple routine technical exercises I've offered them. Apparently the reason for the amazing number of rejections lies in this fact.

WITH THE INFINITE IN MAN...

Here is a crumb of mystical wisdom that a writer might well apply inwardly. I came across it in HOME PRAYERS, Rev. Allen W. Clark, Calvary Church, Danvers, Mass. It is a home devotional service for invalids and persons unable to get to church. It's free save for twice-a-year free will offerings. It's good!

"Dare to trust God! Dare to ask Him to do great things for you. Especially, dare to ask Him to do great things through you! Dare to ask Him to use you for His purposes....Many of the most breath-taking answers to prayer come when someone prays lovingly, self-forgetfully, for the urgent needs of others... God seems to be able best to answer such caring prayers."

"Dare to trust God—He waits to share with you His riches."

There isn't a writer who has not found he has earthly limitations of accomplishment. A wise man leans on God at such times.

## REWRITE

### A WORD ABOUT CHILDREN'S THEATERS

In various parts of America children's theaters are springing up and, this is a vital angle, taking the theater to the children. This may not be an immediate market for the mss. of writers, but it certainly is building an audience for the future. As Bill argued in the open discussion at the Professional Theater panel at the N. E. Theater Conference, if, like the Little League system, we catch our audiences for ideas & good literature early and carry them continuously along until they are adults, there is a good chance that they will develop an interest in the "arts through high quality entertainment" and the living theater instead of cheap and shabby mechanical substitutes. There is also just a small chance that in a few hundred years from now the world will find war & destruction the bore and waste of precious energy it is.

Here are the facts about one active, well managed children's theater:

The Children's Theater of Portland, Maine.. Miss Margaret Dutton, 260 Congress St., Portland 3, Me. Non-profit community organization. 4 winter productions in Greater Portland high schools, troupes performances in Maine and New England. 2 summer productions in Trailor Theater, a mobile unit, that gives about 30 performances in parks and housing projects. Last year 61 performances were seen by some 36,000 children altogether.)

It is supported by season ticket sale, box-office receipts, coin collections at Trailor Theater shows, out-of-town performances, donations, and support from the Portland Parks and Recreation Dep't. Miss Dutton is a full-time, paid managing director.

Talented teen-age volunteer actors handle the drama, music and dance portions of these productions. Adult and student volunteers design, build scenery & costume the shows, in the Theater's workshop, 94 Chadwick st.,

We urge writers to take an interest in and encourage these theaters. (Tell us about any in your community!) They may provide a story for you today, and may offer you a market tomorrow.

### GRAIN OF SALT DEPARTMENT

We recently saw some "literature" from one of the correspondence schools regarding its latest course. If a writer wants to bite on packaged education that is his business. We object, though, to the emphasis in this kind of sales letter. It always subtly distorts, by making writing look easy. Incomes of \$100 a week, or \$7,500 to \$10,000 a year are suggested as being not uncommon, "once you get started." (Actually, the Authors' League is certain that comparatively few professional writers earn that kind of money regularly. A curious irony is that this course lumps two very dissimilar, unrelated types of writing

### NEGOTIATION IS AN AGENT'S JOB

A writer told us the other day about a sad experience that happened to her as a result of her first novel being accepted. It was a long novel and she was a comparatively "unknown" author. Result: the publisher put in the contract a clause enabling him to cut a sufficient amount of wordage from the ms. It was not done in a manner satisfactory to the writer. But there was nothing she could do, except withdraw the ms.

Now we have consistently told writers the unknown author can rarely find a reputable, successful agent who will handle him—until he has made a name for himself and/or is in a position to produce enough valuable writing properties to make himself commercially profitable for such an agent to handle. (Of course all of the advertising critic-agents would deny this truism and would delight to batten, and fatten themselves on such a potentially profitable client. For if they mismanaged the sale, they would still snatch a profit from their reading fees.)

This, however, is an example of how an agent is badly needed, and can serve a writer, earning many times over his 10% commission. Had I been working with this writer I would certainly have urged her to find herself a good agent before she signed the contract. As a matter of fact, I would have put her in contact with several good agents and let her take her pick. I do not believe that a single reputable agent would refuse to negotiate such a contract, even if they hadn't themselves made the sale. For they would be aware that here was a potentially profitable account. Some writers because of their exacerbating trials and tribulations with critic-agents, prefer when success comes, to go it alone. That's foolish because in this case an agent could have protected the writer.

Ask us all the questions you wish. That's part of our job as editors of a professional magazine with an international trade circulation. We are very glad to give you full benefit of our experience and of the Central Ms. Markets File, which has on tap accurate and timely data about 3,000 or more markets. It also covers hundreds of critics, agents & varied services for writers as well as many sources of specialized information. (Whenever we see a name or address of this kind we nail it down!) We don't know everything, no one does. Occasionally, we discover "holes" in our coverage, but for the most part we'll find an answer to your problem, or tell you where you can get it. If it has anything to do with writing, ask us.

Please Remember. REWRITE makes no charges for this service. It wants you to have honest, disinterested help. Such help, when it is good, can't be properly paid for. It is often without price. But it costs money both to collect and dispense it. It is time consuming in both directions. So, think of this and let your conscience be your guide.

## REWRITE

REWRITE and WCS make no charge for small, run-of-the-mill questions. (It would require too much time wasted in billing and correspondence.) And they annually help a sizable number of handicapped and shut-in writers—men and women with no means for obtaining a teacher or advice when needed.

We are able to do this because loyal members of the WCS Family have in the past aided us to start the WCS Scholarship Fund. It takes care of such emergencies with free subscriptions to REWRITE and a certain amount of unpaid advice and analysis from WCS. Incidentally, the Fund is a revolving one, and we are very proud of the many beneficiaries who, aware of this, have repaid part or all of the help given them, so that the Fund in time could help two or three or four others who might be worse off than the first beneficiary. Help from the Fund is never an obligation, but we believe this feature makes character and strengthens the morale of unnumbered writers.

So, if you appreciate the help that we're able to give you, send us in stamps or coin or a small check whatever your conscience in its wisdom suggests. We will credit it to the Fund, and the Fund will soon help some other writer. Such contributions while they entail extra work for us, also help us to pay the upkeep of the Central Ms. Markets File, and to make REWRITE a more serviceable magazine for all writers.

And while you are about it, tell friends, and fellow writers about REWRITE & the Fund. Remember that while we never advertise WCS, we like it to be like a shining white lighthouse that guides weary travellers by day & night. Its service is for all, and the word of mouth comments of those who pass by carry the message of its usefulness.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST TO POETS

The Poetry Society of Oklahoma, Leslie A. McHILL, Ed. & Myrtle Brown, Assoc. Ed., is to be congratulated on its October Bulletin. Attractively printed, it carried news, sales and 21 poems by Oklahoma poets, with a brief connecting comment concerning each. Primarily edited to advance Poetry Day throughout the State, it nevertheless should be continued as a valuable adjunct of the Society... Poets outside the State can join this group by paying the regular dues. We suggest that the Bulletin should always carry the name & address of the corresponding secretary, and any interested poets address REWRITE's subscriber, and formerly cor. sec., Mrs. Velma Reynolds Harper, 201 E. Rennie Ave., Pauls Valley, Okla.

Carl de Suse, WBZ, 1170 Soldiers Field Rd., Allston 38, Mass., m.c. of the "Suse Q" early morning show, has for some time been reading poem each morning without credit to the author or any previous publisher. REWRITE suggested the poet's by-line be added. The reply was evasive. But names are now used!

## KEEP TO ONE LINE OF INTEREST!

The problem of viewpoint in a story is an unceasing one. Especially in a novel an author wishes to cover many places and appear to get inside all of his characters. How to do it and yet maintain a unity of impression is the big headache that every writer must face. If he switches from place to place or jerks his camera about, and follows several lines of plot action, he is likely to break his main line of interest. If he goes inside too many characters, the reader cannot identify himself with any of them.

The trick is to develop a central line of interest that develops step by step. Older novelists managed to do this by the action-packed or picaresque novel, in which a situation was picked up, wrung dry and then discarded in favor of another. Perhaps episode would be a better word than situation. Today we demand a much more compact story, in which the same characters work out a complicated and intense sort of social relation. A writer must write much more tightly, and be a lot smarter.

The viewpoint of a writer who pretends to be a story-teller telling his story aloud to the listener is always an effective one, if it does not deteriorate into mere "telling" by the author. For it enables him to keep a universal viewpoint yet seem to identify entirely with the MC. The reader can play God and look down on the entire scene without actually going inside other characters. Perspective is gained and thus the larger relationships are visualized, yet an immediacy, an intensification of the present and the individual scene is retained whenever we slip wholly into the viewpoint of the MC.

As I tried to explain to a novelist quite recently, the value of the multiple viewpoint always lies in the fact that it does not appear to be a split viewpoint. It merely allows the reader to do that daydreaming that takes him speculatively into the mind of another character while still retaining his own bodily limitations. You know how we sometimes lie in bed and relive a scene, but imagine, perhaps, how someone else must have viewed it.

In other words, the multiple viewpoint is never an easy way out of a difficult technical problem in telling a story. Many writers think that when they don't know how they are going to get from one scene to another, they can always shift from one line of "interest" to another, and pick up a new character. That is the worst possible thing to do. It splits the story in two and dissipates a reader's interest in the story. When multiple viewpoint is well used the reader never is conscious that he has lost identity with the MC. He merely feels he is getting a larger view point on the same situation. Multiple angles do not take one out of the viewpoint of the MC. They merely give different camera shots on the same identical "line of interest". Unity in the story is preserved.

## REWRITE

### HOW WELL CAN YOU "PLANT"?

A wise old writer once said to me: "Really, you know, you can do almost anything in a story, if you plant it properly." That is very true. If the reader is ready for something to happen, he will accept it. But if you hit him over the head with it, surprise him, which many writers mistake for "drama" and "twist" in a story, he will resent it & at the very least consider it implausible.

"Planting", in case you have forgotten, is simply the technical device of mentioning a subject before you plan to use it. You may just slip the idea in sideways, so innocuously and disarmingly that the reader does not notice it at the time. That is the method a clever writer uses in a mystery story. You give the reader all the premises; you plant a clue, but cover it up with more important material. It slips past the reader momentarily, but when the need for that little scrap of information arises, you have only to refresh the reader's mind, and he will recall that the characters were talking about it & so it does not seem like new material, or as if the author were suddenly changing rules.

Here is an example of how an author didn't plant correctly. Joe, the MC, was a student in high school. His father, proud of a family business, wanted Joe to work at the factory during the summer. The boy had a better idea. But the reader was not told of the dream in his mind until on graduation night the father casually referred to "the hotel". What hotel! exclaims the reader in exasperation. He stops, backtracks to see if he has missed anything, finds he has not, and then tries to pick up where he has left. In the meantime, the flow of the story and the central line of interest (most important thing in any kind of writing, according to W. Somerset Maugham) has evaporated into thin air.

Now all this author had to do was to have a scene in which the characters indulging a bit of spring fever on the steps during recess, would swap plans for the coming summer. The hotel where a lot of them plan to go waiting on table and other jobs, could come up for review and comparison. Joe might not have fully decided between going along with the gang, or being loyal to his father. But the fact that the hotel is mentioned at all prepares the reader for the next reference.

Incidentally, that is one very neat method of plotting offstage, so to speak. Without actually writing the dramatic scenes or sequence showing how Joe makes up his mind, you can drop in a casual reference that indicates how the wind is blowing. The father changing from enthusiastic hope to tolerant acceptance of the inevitable; the decision, made by Joe's best friend, or his girl, that we can assume from past experience will sway him. You may never show Joe arriving at a decision. You don't need to, because you have dropped enough straws.

In this kind of plotting, which is especially suited to the novel with its slower & more leisurely depiction of detail, you let the reader do some of the plotting by putting two and two together and arriving at the correct result. But notice this: each of the indirect references is a step in a line and each directs the reader's interest forward, to the next step. Each has an arrow on it & you move the reader forward through the story without his being aware of the effort.

It is a very useful technical device. By kicking an idea forward through successive, indirect references, you prepare the ground for a change in the attitude of one or another of the principal characters towards it & so when you come to the actual decision and change, the reader is ready to accept it. A decision can therefore be actually omitted or tied up quickly. You don't have to clarify it or nail it down with a lot of tardy, weak explanations that do not convince your reader.

Technically, what you are doing is to set up a line of interest built out of the theme or ideas at the core of the story. This is a parallel and more intellectual line which runs through the story side by side with the line of interest that is concerned with what happens (the action) in the story. A line of interest of this kind is extremely valuable, because it gives the story movement—especially the quiet, plotless type of story. And at its best it provides intellectual and emotional excitement.

You see, what you are doing is to "carry" the reader from point to point. And at each point he himself generates overtones, implications of meaning or significance over and beyond what is actually stated in so many definite, fixed statements or words printed on the page. It is like what you do in a sailboat. You line up a course based on 2 points. One of these may be behind you and one ahead. Or two ahead of you. As long as you keep the vessel straight in line with these two fixed points, you know you are on the course. A Yankee lobsterman still plots his course even today back into the harbor by lining up a mooring float with the steeple of the village church on the hill. Or, further out, in the bay, the steeple and a bell buoy.

It cannot be stressed too much that such a technical device in a story serves two purposes: it prepares the reader for the direction in which he is moving, and also the amount of movement actually achieved. As I've already said, this technical means of emphasizing meaning and movement can be very useful in the type of story that does not race along with obvious action and turns on each and every page, because it tends to draw the reader forward without his realizing it. It is like the artificial movement that a good stage director uses to pep up an over conversational play in which the action doesn't require actual physical movement.

## REWRITE

### LEARNING THIS LESSON COMES HARD

Feature writers can learn a lot by seeing what READERS' DIGEST picks up from the other books because the editors of RD consider these pieces have mass appeal. In one issue recently I saw short pieces about vandalism in the national parks, and what a home town really is. Both human interest stories calculated to arouse and pull on the emotional heartstrings of millions of people. An article and an essay that any writer with ordinary imagination could have written. One appeared in NATURAL HISTORY, the other in a small town newspaper, The Fairless Hills NEWS. Neither one a market where inexperienced or beginning writers need fear the competition of big slick writers. Yet they reached that audience eventually. Showing the truth of a maxim now hoary with age: it's what you write, not where you sell it or how much you get for it, that counts.

### NEWS OF VARIOUS MARKETS

Ballantine Books, 404 5th Ave., NYC 18, is scheduled to begin publication this month. A potential big new market, this paper-covered books publisher, since it plans to issue "3 titles a month, either to be co-published or published by Ballantine Books, and are regularly scheduled in both paper & cloth bound editions for the months following December, 1952."

Ruth & Maxwell Aley, 145 East 35th St., NYC. That's a new address for these agents. Ruth tells me they are combining a midtown residence and office there.

Here is a hint she offered one of the WGS Family recently. "I am telling him," she said to me, "that the publication of an article, in a slick magazine or the READERS' DIGEST, is one of the best means of interesting some book publisher to offer a generous advance."

### NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

CONFessions, Hillman Periodicals, 535 5th Ave., NYC, is charged with misrepresentation by not clearly indicating that all stories, as presently printed in this magazine, have previously appeared in REAL STORY, and REAL ROMANCE, other Hillman books. It is thus, a closed market for writers of Confessions.

Eastman Kodak, Rochester, N. Y., "the nation's leading manufacturer of photographic products," is charged with "unfair competition" through price-fixing agreements which hold some of its retail store customers to a level of prices set by Eastman's own retail stores, thus making camera users the victims of a monopoly in supply.

American Greetings Corp., 1300 W. 78th St., Cleveland, Ohio, is ordered by a trial examiner's initial decision to terminate certain practices in restraint of trade. One of these would prevent the company from buying up or otherwise "removing from normal channels of

distribution...competitors' greeting cards."

DESERET NEWS has discontinued its poetry column. PROGRESSIVE FARMER, 821 N. 18th St., Birmingham 2, Ala., was buying poetry as of the middle of Sept., and was not overstocked, while AMERICAN CHILDHOOD was overstocked, according to Virginia Randall, editor of "475 Paying Poetry Markets".

The Blackiston Co. (a subsidiary of Double day & Co.) now shares the same address: 375 Madison Ave., NYC 22.

Muhlenberg Press, United Lutheran Publishing House, 1228 Spruce St., Philadelphia 7, Pa., is beginning a fiction program in November with Elizabeth Patton Moss' "The Iranian", winner of the \$5,000 Ring Award. Other titles will follow. A market for religious fiction. Limited now, but susceptible of growth.

### WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION?

Late in August, two Sci. Fict. writers and an editor, Martin Greenberg, Gnome Presq. addressed the Editors' Lunch Club. A stimulating time was evidently had.

Alfred Bester: (PUBLISHERS WEEKLY)

book publishers face the same dilemma today that the science fiction magazines did twenty years ago. Mr. Bester said that publishers are mistaken if they think that all the public wants is "erotic stimulation," reflected in suggestive stories and cover art work which he termed the "Typhoid Mary" variety. Science fiction readers are often ten years ahead of magazine and book publishers in the kind of stories they want, he said, and because the book publishers can no longer coast along on material originally screened for them by the magazines, they must realize, in looking for new material, that the public does not want "space" simply tacked on to types of novels which were successful in the past. "Readers do not want Eric Stanley Gardner or Frank Yerby in 'space,'" he said, "nor things like 'I, the Space Jury.'"

Theodore Sturgeon:

He believes that "not since the Middle Ages has there been such a credulous reading public." He thinks it goes for many "psychoses of our age" that may be worse than what the "Typhoid Mary" covers stand for.

Martin Greenberg:

He wondered how book publishers can possibly compete against magazines. "A S-F magazine will pay \$1,200 for a 70,000 word story," whereas a book publisher will offer "an advance of about \$500." He says sales "have increased from 1,500 copies average 5 years ago to about 4,000 copies now." Hans Santesson, Unicorn Mystery Club, says there are about 2,000,000 S-F readers now, and the market should not be underestimated by publishers or writers. Get ready for it now!

## REWRITE

### ELIMINATE THIS REJECTION DANGER

Recently, we received two letters regarding novels that stretched to 500 odd pages, in ms. Both experienced difficulty in finding a publisher. One is listed as an autumn publication by a small publisher. The latter cut approximately 100 ms. page out of it. The other at last accounts had been "accepted" tentatively by a vanity publisher. Even he, however, balked at the length and asked the author to write a shorter book for prior publication. Both mss. are by unknowns.

The moral of this seems to be that the unknown writer would do well to keep his first book down to average size. Houghton Mifflin Co. has been indulging itself in reams upon reams of publicity about the "longest novel ever written" by a comparatively unknown author. But that is a gag. The firm is dreaming and hoping it has a second "From Here to Eternity". That is the exception that proves the rule.

A long novel means added expense to a publisher. If it flops, his loss is greater. A very short novel on the other hand is equally hazardous, because it does not justify a full price. And readers who wish to be held over a period of hours, are quick to notice the big white paper breaks at the beginning and end of every chapter, or the wide space between lines. They want their money's worth. So, either way the failure to conform is an error in tactical judgment that may cost an author and his publisher dear.

Many first novels by inexperienced writers are "protest" novels. They have a yen to get something off their chest. This is hazardous also. The big name of an established writer will sometimes carry an innovation in form, or substance. Very rarely, you can interest a reader in novelty per se. If you can make snob appeal serve you, you may light a fire under the general public. But only if it is fashionable and the timing ties in with the news-peg of interest that gets everyone discussing the fad of the moment. But fads and novelties that are "different" seldom catch on at moments of great news or drama. They appeal when there is a lull and people have become either tired or bored.

I do not mean by this that a new writer's success will be guaranteed by the degree he conforms and imitates other writers or standards. It won't. To be colorless, hum-drum, like hundreds of other writers or stories is the surest road to oblivion and, incidentally rejection. A writer must have something, be unique. But he is smart if he doesn't require an expensive investment to put on his show. Indeed, many of the great money-makers in every genre have been relatively "cheap" productions, that somehow have caught on because there was fire inside of them.

In the short or magazine fiction field also there is strategy in achieving original-

ity within accustomed limitations. No matter how time changes the picture with regard to special lengths, agents continue to tell you that 3,000 words is the ideal length. A writer with his eye on the slicks or possibly the small secondaries, may be puzzled by this pronouncement.

The point is that a 3,000 word ms. can be shot at both the slicks and the secondaries. A 5,000 word ms. must hit the slicks, or it will have to be rewritten. In spite of many perfunctory listings of the requirements in writers' magazines, the slicks are not usually interested in short shorts or even the 1,500 to 2,000 word story. There are exceptions, specialties such as those used in the AMERICAN and COLLIER'S. But for most of the markets only the very striking short short, by a big name, or for prestige reasons is a lure for slick editors. The very short story introduces too many problems. It won't cut back and absorb its share of the advertising. It has to get blown up to two pages or it interferes with the lay-out for other stories, or becomes "lost" among the general features. Read your magazines and notice how rarely short shorts are used in the big books.

But the 3,000 word story with a minimum amount of revision can be adapted to any magazine's purposes. Top length for the secondaries, shortest length for the slicks, it's likely to make any editor snap at the fly. A general utility story, it is like the utility player that all baseball clubs carry. It can "play" any position and fill many an embarrassing "hole" on short notice. Editors like it.

The wonder to me is that so few writers—one in a hundred—have thought this problem through. It's such an easy way to get editors warmed up and interested in your mss. I observe the vulnerability of writers in this respect in the many mss. I read each year. A vast majority of them are 5,000 or even six thousand words long. That is an open invitation to test the mss. for loose writing, for essential cutting. Many a good story gets a rejection slip largely because the editor's readers warn him it needs to be cut, drastically. And more editors than you would suspect, are men or women of principle. They do not believe in office cutting.

I would be willing to bet that one writer in a thousand has forced himself to "sweat" out a real cutting lesson. Suppose a story, written by you is 6,000 words. Pretend that an editor will take it, if you can cut it to 4,000 words, or even 3,000. Two thousand to 3,000 words is a lot of words to hack out of one story. Yet it can be done, and the story may be a better story. No one who has ever forced himself to cut all the tangential, superfluous ideas, and unnecessary words is likely to be quite so wordy again. He will be surprised at how much more seriously editors take him. Be smart, be brief & unique!